

**8.5 Square Mile Area Public Information Update  
John D. Campbell Agricultural Center  
18710 SW 288 Street, Homestead, FL 33030  
Tuesday, December 20, 2005, 7:00 p.m.**

**INTRODUCTION**

A public information update was held on 20 December 2005 at the John D. Campbell Agricultural Center (JDCAC) in Homestead, FL to provide updated information on the 8.5 Square Mile Area. The doors opened at 6:30 p.m. with graphic displays, fliers with frequently asked questions, and the public had the opportunity to speak with representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Everglades National Park. In addition, the following contractors were also present: Atlantic Skanska, Civil Construction Technologies, Florida Energy Services, and Vibration Energy Services. Representatives were also available from National Park Service, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Miami-Dade Police Department and Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. All representatives were available to answer questions one-on-one as the public viewed the graphic displays. Approximately 100 members of the public attended.

At 7 p.m., the Spanish Translator made an announcement offering complimentary headphones which would allow attendees to hear the entire 8.5 Square Mile Area Public Information Update in Spanish. The formal presentation began at 7 p.m. Tony Jettinghoff, Project Engineer, welcomed everyone to the public meeting, introduced the presenting team, identified the representatives on hand, and gave a general overview of the meeting. Tony emphasized this is an informational meeting to brief attendees on the modified water deliveries, the pump station, and the construction of canals and levees during the construction phase of the 8.5 Square Mile Area will be discussed.

Dennis Duke, Program Manager for Restoration, provided an overview of Modified Water Deliveries. This is a restoration program authorized in the 1989 Everglades Expansion Act. As it relates to this restoration plan, Dennis provided an update on what has occurred in the past, where the Army Corps is today and what will be done in the future. The Army Corps will be building an outer levee, a new pump station, and stormwater

treatment area. The Army Corps is acquiring land. The Tamiami Trail feature of the Modified Water Deliveries project has a recommended plan that includes a new highway on Tamiami Trail – raised, widened with two new bridges provided for additional capacity of water transfer. The new highway contract should be awarded in late 2006. The level of service for flood protection in 8.5 Square Mile area is paramount. Once the levee goes into place and the pump station starts operation, area residents will see considerable change to problems currently in existence. Total cost is slightly under \$4 million and it will be completed by the end of 2009.

Alan Bugg, Chief Construction and Operations, Jacksonville District, provided an overview of the construction phase. This is the last step of this journey. Construction will be done in a way to minimize impacts outside of the construction area. To construct the seepage canal, the contractors will need to do some blasting. Blasting is the fastest and most economical way. The contractors have to go down below the initial layers of rock. They can't use that rock as foundation. The canal must be finished within 7 months. The only way to do that is with blasting. It would double or triple the costs if blasting didn't occur. Blasting is a standard construction procedure for large projects in South Florida.

Alan Bugg emphasized that the Army Corps of Engineers will ensure that all structures will be left in the exact same condition after the blasting operation, as found prior to the blasting operation. When the blasting starts, if property is inside the effective area, the contractors will do a pre-blasting survey to ensure the property is left in the exact same condition it was prior to blasting. A post-blasting survey will also be conducted. Vibration Energy Services, Inc. will do the pre-blasting inspections. Pre-blasting surveys will probably first occur January 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> and the blasting will begin shortly thereafter. Blasting will be done during daylight hours. Blasting will not be done on weekends or holidays. Only one or two blasts should occur per day. Blasting is done in limited areas, under controlled conditions, with as little explosive as possible. Warning sirens will be heard five minutes before the blast. Access to the blast site will be restricted, at the time of the blast, by a flag person. Area residents may hear a noise, see a small cloud of dust or feel a slight vibration, but they should be surprised at how minimal it is. Blasting will be monitored and must meet strict regulations for noise and vibration levels.

Area residents will not be required to leave their homes. If the contractor determines that a home or business is too close to a blasting site, then that portion will be done manually, not via blasting. If there is a problem during the pump station blasting, contact Vibration Energy Services, Florida Energy Services, Inc or Atlantic Skanska (telephone numbers were provided during this meeting, including the number for Alan Bugg).

The blasting zone has a 750 foot vibration radius around the pump station and seepage canal. If an area resident lives within this area, they will be contacted for pre-blasting survey and post-blasting survey. All contractors were identified by name and telephone numbers were provided. Website information was also provided to obtain a copy of this presentation and/or to obtain additional information at [www.saj.usace.army.mil](http://www.saj.usace.army.mil), clicking on Modified Water Deliveries and then 8.5 Square Mile Area.

Various individuals noted they wanted to comment during the presentation. Tony Jettinghoff called on those individuals to give them the opportunity to comment. Below is a listing of those comments.

### **RANGE OF COMMENTS**

- Signs should have been posted to better inform people of this meeting. Not everyone received sufficient notification regarding this meeting.
- No one has mentioned if fences would be built around the canal/levee. Resident would rather see the canal without a fence and with a boat ramp into this canal.
- Ownership should remain with South Florida Water Management, not Parks Services. Parks Services are perceived to limit access and to conduct themselves in an unfriendly fashion.
- A general statement was made questioning if the levee would be landscaped, would the levee be small or large, if large, does it need to be large. In addition, resident suggested that the fill be used to fix roads around this area and make sure that roads will be repaired and put back to their original condition.
- 213 is not a large road. Construction vehicles should go down another road that is wider and equipped to handle larger vehicles.
- Resident heard the center line of the levee will be 770 feet from 213. Why didn't we make this a straight levee, rather than winding it around various homes? Homeowners feel this is discriminatory with no regard to people living in the area for a long period of time.

- Has a cultural/historical study been conducting identifying what happens in this area? Are we going to be able to continue horseback riding, A.T.C.'ing, swamp bugging, frogging, etc.? Area residents are people who want to enjoy the area, wide open spaces, go where they want without fences and "no trespassing" signs and not be harassed by the Parks Service. They don't want people stopping everyone from going into this area saying don't do this, don't do that.
- If some homeowners want to deal with their own flooding as opposed to selling their land and moving away, why are they being forced out of their homes?
- Army Corps says this will eliminate/minimize flooding, but what about flash flooding? If there were ruts along the side of the road, this would deal with flash flooding.
- We are glad you are doing something. We are against buy-outs - buying out people's land.
- Tony addressed some of these comments – Fencing will occur on construction site because the contractor needs to keep the area secure and avoid injury in the construction site. Afterwards, SFWMD will work with the community in an attempt to establish recreation areas, non-passing bike trails, horseback riding, boating, etc. Fences will initially be in place to keep the area clear, avoid dumping, etc. Maintenance crews will also be brought in to keep area clear.
- Has a historical/cultural study been done? By law, it is required. Dennis - A study was done in 2000 and signed off by a State historical representative. Recreation is a different issue. Lands will belong to SFWMD, not Parks Service. Parks Service will be present to help keep the area clean. Army Corps will work with SFWMD to address trespassing and other issues mentioned.
- Resident lives on 205 Avenue, if any damages occur, who will pay for damages to my house? Tony - You will notify the contractor. They will do the post-blasting inspection, compare to the pre-blasting inspection. If damage determined, this must be resolved within 6 months. Any road damage, if it occurs, must be restored to initial condition.
- Resident worried about blasting. Blasting can cause damage. While resident understands blasting is faster and easier, he was still very concerned about the people living near the blasting. In addition, he questioned debris removal. He owns a business in that area, knows that area and knows how to do the work. Why can't Army Corps

subcontract some of this work to the locals to keep the money within the community? Tony – The contract currently exists with contractors. Impact area will be well-defined. Contractors can easily determine if structure needs a pre-blasting survey and go through the process. Contractor can get the job completed as soon as possible. Doing this work manually would not allow the contractor to get this done on time.

- Once project is completed and the contractors are gone, what if we identify damages at that point, who's going to be responsible? Tony – we will continue through the previously mentioned process. Alan - Damage caused by blasting will be evident. The time to notify Vibration Services is the day you notice the damage. Don't wait. Get it addressed immediately. It would be a rare occurrence for blasting to cause a problem which isn't readily noticeable. Army Corps is ultimately responsible and will get involved if contractor does not resolve the issue.
- Will other property purchases occur? Dennis - After this phase, no more property purchases will occur for this project. Property purchases may occur with other projects, but not this one.
- Alice Pena, President, United Property Owners of the 8.5 Square Mile Area has been working on this issue for quite some time. They have talked with the commissioner. They will be working with everyone to ensure this is done correctly and as anticipated.
- Another resident expressed frustration with the Army Corps of Engineers responsiveness to his concerns over the past several months. Prior contractors did damage to area roads and didn't repair them. Please take care of 213. Tony – The Contractor (Atlantic Skanska) represented at the public meeting was just arriving on site and should not be associated with prior issues. However, when this construction phase is in the vicinity of the resident, Atlantic Skanska and Tony will ensure they are available to respond to any concerns resident may have. Mr. Duke and I reminded the resident that we would be available after the public meeting to address his specific issues with past Corps of Engineer activities. Various Contractors - We are not just coming to do a job. We are coming to do the best. Area residents should tell the contractor of any problem and they will take care of those roads. They will also ensure the hull roads are maintained. Army Corps of Engineers is ultimately responsible; therefore, they want to know if the contractors do not resolve the issue.

## **QUESTION & ANSWER PERIOD**

- Q: Why can't roads be fixed before the project starts and give the community relief now? A: The only portion of the project awarded to date is the pump station. Contractor does not have notice from the government to proceed with the other areas of this contract; therefore, they cannot currently begin road work. Once that portion of the contract begins, the contractor will maintain the roads. The contractor will also return roads to their original condition after the project.
- Q: Will the levee L31 be redundant and removed now? A: No, there are no plans to remove that levee at this point.
- Q: There is a lot of fill around the L31 levee. Could this fill be used as opposed to purchasing new fill? A: As the contract gets started, Army Corps will work with the contractors on this issue and try to reuse this fill.
- Q: Of the land purchase tracks under negotiation, what about the two other tracks not under negotiation? A: Dennis said he must have an error on his slide. He apologized if the numbers didn't add up correctly. All needed tracks are under negotiation.
- Q: What are the exact boundaries where the pump station is at? A: The poster displayed in the back of the room was referenced and the boundaries were defined by various representatives.
- Q: I am on 141 and 208. The levee they are doing will cross on 208 and will stop me from crossing 136. They are closing 136 and the residents need to know how they will be able to get in and out of this area. Recently, the contractor created access on 144. The contractor cleaned it, but the road is now lower and floods. Homes are on 141 to 136. The residents put the existing road in and now this road and access to this road is being taken away from them. What can we do about it? A: See Tony after the meeting, provide additional information, and Tony will assist them.
- Q: What type of protection is provided – stop additional waters from coming into the area, but these water levels won't be better than levels in 1981. Can this be classified as flood protection? A: Army Corps is building a flood mitigation system to ensure flooding doesn't get worse. Because of the way the canal interacts with ground water, area residents will have better flood protection. It dries it out and affords residents protection. But, the Army Corps cannot provide a statement on flood protection. The Army Corps can provide a map showing

- how this will work. The pump station will control the ground water. Area residents are actually provided with a higher level of service.
- Q: You are saying you are providing more than 10 year protection, but you can't document it? A: Yes, that is correct.
  - Q: Once building is all done, we will have 10 year protection? A: Yes, you will have better protection.
  - Q: I own a nursery, my insurance company requires I raise my land or they won't insure me. Once we spent millions of dollars on this project, I still have to spend a lot of money to raise my property or I can't get insurance. What is the use of this project? A: The project was not designed to lower flooding and address insurance issues. It will reduce flood levels.
  - Q: What is the project for? A: We are restoring natural flow in NE Shark River Slough. This project is to take care of increased water due to this restoration so that it doesn't go into the area properties. By putting in levees and canals, we will reduce flooding.
  - Q: If you could utilize the ditches on the side of the road, it may help suck the water out of the area, right? A: Army Corps will look into this to see how they tie in. This is a good point.

Dennis thanked everyone for coming. Blasting is not what some fear. We appreciate your patience and look forward to finishing this within the year. Tony thanked everyone for coming out. He emphasized that the Army Corps tried to solicit as much involvement as possible within the time constraints associated with the project. The Army Corps will try to put signs out for future meetings. Happy Holidays.

All agency representatives and contractors were available for additional questions at the close of the meeting.